

A FEW NOTES ON BIRDS IN THE NORTHERN LAKE
RUDOLF AREA.

By LT.-COL. B. G. LYNN-ALLEN.

Battalion arrived on July 24th, 1941.

1941.

JULY 25TH TO 31ST.

Fulvous tree-duck and Egyptian geese still bringing up young (about two to three weeks old) in some cases, though others of same species were already in small flights (possibly family parties?).

White-faced tree-duck seemed to be earlier as no flappers, seen, though some were in pairs and some in flights.

No other species of duck seen until August 27th.

AUGUST 27TH.

First teal seen, in two or three small flights, identified a few days later as Hottentot teal. (These teal only seemed to stay a few weeks—after that I did not see another throughout the winter.)

SEPTEMBER 5TH.

First shoveler seen (one)—only seen in flight but quite unmistakable. From this date onwards shoveler became, very gradually, more common.

SEPTEMBER 15TH.

First snipe seen.

First knob-billed goose seen—this was definitely a bird of the year.

Big flights of white-faced tree-duck feeding in the freshly inundated area opposite Namaraputti.

SEPTEMBER 17TH.

Four Caspian tern seen—I *may* have seen them earlier but do not remember doing so.

SEPTEMBER 21ST AND 22ND.

Hundreds of wagtails (I think the yellow and the blue-headed) arrived. One species; greenish-brown above, yellow below, wing-coverts and outer tail-feathers picked out with darker brown, white when in flight; many birds (young?) with yellow vents only, remainder of under-sides yellow-washed white.

More snipe seen.

Saw a pair of shoveler.

Shot a knob-billed goose (female in easily recognisable plumage).

I was away from the west of Lake Rudolf from September 28th to December 5th, but was over on the east side of Lake Rudolf at Ilert on October 17th and 18th, where I saw and shot white-faced tree-duck, fulvous tree-duck, and African pochard.

I also saw shoveler and teal (I think garganey).

DECEMBER 5TH.

Pintail were now well in and fighting down the lake-shore every morning any time between 6-30 a.m. and 10 a.m. No evening flight. Shot my first pintail of the season on this day.

DECEMBER 17TH.

We shot a pool near the River Omo at Shunguru, a big evening flight came in at and after dark — shoveler, pintail, garganey teal, knob-billed geese, African pochard, fulvous tree duck, and white-faced tree-duck were all secured on this shoot.

N.B.—From mid-December onwards the chocolate heads and white necks of the adult drake pintail could be picked out as the birds passed in the air.

DECEMBER 20TH.

(South of Todanyang the unusually heavy rains had formed pools about one mile from the lake. They were very open water and were enjoyed by the European duck, a few African pochard and the Egyptian geese, but no fulvous or white-faced tree-duck were ever there. Both these latter species seemed to prefer inundated areas in thick grass and *not* open water.)

On this day these pools yielded Egyptian geese, shoveler, garganey teal, European teal (three), and a single European wigeon drake coming into full plumage — the dark green speculum well developed. This bird seemed to be a lone straggler—no more were shot or seen during the winter.

DECEMBER 22ND TO 26TH.

Spent at Ferguson's Bay (some 65 miles south of Abyssinian border). Geese and duck in large numbers were present. (Flying with Capt. Bingley on Christmas evening I obtained to my own gun one pintail, two garganey teal, two European teal, nine white-faced tree-duck, five fulvous tree-duck, one Egyptian goose, and one knob-billed goose — unfortunately losing about nine other duck in reedy water.)

Snipe and shoveler were also obtained at Ferguson's Bay and a few African pochard were seen.

DECEMBER 31ST.

An Egyptian goose was shot with eggs (just ready for laying) inside her. These geese were mostly in packs but a few in pairs.

1942.

JANUARY 10TH.

On this day one (and probably two) gadwall was obtained south of Todanyang and some six miles south of the Abyssinian border.

This prize fell to Capt. Roy Bingley.

We were shooting in two parties and it was not until next morning that I saw Bingley, who informed me that this bird was one of a party of four out of which he obtained a right and left. When I went through the bag that evening I naturally picked out the drake gadwall, but am afraid that I probably missed the duck gadwall sorting, as I was, by the light of a hurricane lantern.

I have shot many gadwall in India and there is not the slightest doubt about this particular drake—though the gadwall duck probably obtained is, of course, problematical.

I append a rough description of the plumage of this drake gadwall, in case its "feather-state" is of interest.

Crown—dark.

Gape, ear-coverts—brown/white spotted grey.

Neck-mantle—barred grey and white.

Back—light-brown changing to barred.

Rump—plain, darker brown.

Central tail-feather—dull-grey.

Upper-tail-coverts—black.

Primaries—grey/brown.

Secondaries—grey/black to white.

N.B.—No trace of the small chesnut feathers on the wing.

Primary-wing-coverts—grey darkening to black.

Under-wing-coverts—pure-white.

Breast—white.

Flanks—barred light-grey.

Shoulders—dove-grey.

Under-tail-coverts—black.

Abdomen—very pale barred grey.

Legs and feet—dull-yellow with blackish-grey webs.

Lower mandible—dusky-yellow.

Upper mandible—black.

The bird in very good condition and normal gadwall size.

N.B.—I have never seen yellow-billed duck, pink-billed teal, or white-backed duck on Lake Rudolf.